



Durham Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 1, Introduction and Administration Element

**Durham City-County Planning Department
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The Durham Comprehensive Plan

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Chapter 1, Introduction and Administration Element

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Introduction



***What is a
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A plan represents a logical method for achieving a desired end. For Durham's long range planning, the end is how its citizens want our community to be in the future—how it will look, how it will work and how it will preserve what is special, while accommodating the growth we anticipate. The logical method is the deliberate steps Durham takes today, tomorrow and the next day that will result in the future its citizens want. The key is to ensure that what we do in the short-term respects and supports how we want to be in the future.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is the statement of local government and its citizens about how they want to grow and develop. The term “comprehensive” refers to two aspects of planning. First, it means that the plan covers all of the territory in the City's and the County's jurisdictions. Second, it means that the plan deals with all the physical aspects of the community's growth and development. It guides how the City, County and schools provide public facilities and services and how the City and County regulate new development. A comprehensive plan is long range in scope, focusing on the needs of the community in the future rather than the concerns of today.

In general, a rapidly growing community should review and update its long-range plans every five to seven years. The Durham 2020 Comprehensive Plan was adopted in late 1995, so an update now is appropriate. The Comprehensive Plan update provides an opportunity for citizens and elected officials to take stock and see if the growth and development policies in the Plan still make sense after several years of rapid change.

The Plan's Vision

Every plan needs a vision. The vision embodies the desires of citizens and elected officials to create a community in which people want to live and can fulfill their own dreams. The Durham Comprehensive Plan Vision describes how Durham will look and function in the future. The Plan's goals, objectives, and policies that follow provide the means of implementing the Plan's Vision.

Durham Comprehensive Plan Vision

- Promote the creation and enhancement of a livable, safe and beautiful community for all Durham citizens.
- Promote a range of choices in transportation, education, housing and economic opportunities to effectively serve a diverse community.
- Promote the identity of our distinct neighborhoods by encouraging design elements and public facilities appropriate to the character of each area.
- Protect our historic heritage, open spaces and natural resources.
- Provide opportunities for high quality growth and development.

How the Plan is Organized

Following this Introduction are seventeen elements, or chapters, of the Durham Comprehensive Plan. The first element anticipates how the Comprehensive Plan will be administered after its adoption. The next six elements provide guidance on how the natural and built environment of Durham ought to grow and develop. These include the Land Use Element, the Housing Element, the Community Character and Design Element, the Historic Preservation Element, the Economic Development Element, and the Conservation and Environment Element.

The next seven elements provide guidance on how Durham should provide community services and facilities. These include the Transportation Element, the Water and Wastewater Element, the Parks and Recreation Element, the Schools Element, the Public Safety Element, the Solid Waste Element, and the Libraries Element.

The last two elements are critical. The Capital Improvements Element outlines the steps Durham will take to provide the community services and facilities needed to support future residents. The final chapter, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Element, commits the City and County to actively working with its neighboring communities to coordinate planning and service delivery. Following the Plan Elements are appendices that includes a glossary of planning terms, a list of commonly used acronyms and a list of references.

Current Conditions Report

Prior to the development of the Durham Comprehensive Plan, the City-County Planning Department prepared a report on current conditions in Durham. This report was to provide an overview of

background information about the Durham community. Background information offers a base of understanding about the community that is crucial when looking toward the future. It provides a clear foundation on which to build the goals, objectives and policies to guide the community's decisions.

The Current Conditions Report also highlights the critical issues that Durham is facing and that should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. How these issues are addressed will directly affect Durham's success in moving into the future.

Preparing the Plan

Creating a long-range plan for a community involved numerous tasks and hundreds of people, including citizens, representatives of interests groups, City and County staff, members of appointed boards and commissions and members of the governing boards. Important steps in the process of preparing the Durham Comprehensive Plan are described below.

- In May, the City-County Planning Department prepared a **Current Conditions Report** for Durham. The report describes Durham's context in the Triangle Region, population, economy, land use, natural environment, and public infrastructure. It identifies issues in each of these areas that Durham's long range plans should address.
- Preparing the Durham Comprehensive Plan included a **Review of Small Area Plans' Objectives and Policies**. The Durham Comprehensive Plan is an update and revision of previously adopted Small Area Plans. However, many of the Small Area Plans' objectives and policies were out-of-date or irrelevant to current conditions in the community. Others were valuable and still useful to guide public infrastructure and private development. The Planning Staff reviewed objectives and policies from the Small Area Plans to glean what was still applicable to Durham's future.
- In May 2003, the City-County Planning Department conducted a series of four **Open House Meetings** for Durham citizens. The purpose was to hear from citizens about issues that they felt were of critical importance for Durham to address as it grows and develops in the future. The Open House Meetings were conducted at the Eno Valley Elementary School Media Center, the Southwest Elementary School Media Center, the Southern High School Media Center and the auditorium of the Downtown Branch of the Durham Public Library. Over 75 citizens attended to express their views on Durham's future. Citizen comments were used to prepare draft goals, objectives and policies for the Plan.
- The **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee** was formed in May 2002 to provide citizen oversight to the entire planning process. The Steering Committee was composed of 20 citizens, representing a broad range of community interests and viewpoints.

The group met over 30 times as the Plan was being prepared to review and adjust the appropriate language for the Plan Vision, goals, objectives and policies. The Steering Committee recommended the draft Durham Comprehensive Plan to the City and County governing boards at its last meeting on May 27, 2004.

- In May and June 2004, the City-County Planning Department conducted a second round of community **Open House Meetings** in the same four locations. The purpose of these meeting was to acquaint interested citizens with the public review draft of the Durham Comprehensive Plan and to solicit their comments. Citizen comments were summarized and presented to the governing boards to consider during their deliberations on the Comprehensive Plan.

Adopting the Plan

The Planning Committee of the Durham Planning Commission reviewed the Durham Comprehensive Plan and held a public hearing to receive comments on August 11, 2004. After consideration of citizens' comments and discussion, the Planning Committee voted to _____. The Board of County Commissioners and the City Council considered the plan with a presentations and public comment in _____ 2004. The Board of County Commissioners adopted the Plan on _____, 2004 and the City Council adopted the Plan on _____, 2004.

Administrative Element



Goals

Goal 1.1, Using the Plan

Goal 1.2, Making Decisions

Preparing and adopting the Comprehensive Plan is only the first step in charting Durham's future. The Plan needs to be systematically implemented through established and well-publicized procedures. Likewise, the Plan and its implementation needs to be regularly evaluated to ensure that it responds to changing conditions and continues to reflect the wants and desires of Durham citizens. The Administrative Element of the Durham Comprehensive Plan provides guidance on how to use the Plan to accomplish its goals, objectives and policies.

Goal 1.1, Using the Plan

Use the Durham Comprehensive Plan to guide public and private decision making about physical development and public infrastructure.

Objective 1.1.1. Plan Elements

Organize the Durham Comprehensive Plan by elements in order to present goals, objectives, and policies in a coherent and organized manner.

Policy 1.1.1a. Plan Elements. The Durham Comprehensive Plan consists of the following chapters, or elements:

- i. Introduction and Administration Element;
- ii. Land Use Element;
- iii. Housing Element;
- iv. Community Character and Design Element;
- v. Historic Preservation Element;
- vi. Economic Development Element;
- vii. Conservation and Environment Element;
- viii. Transportation Element;
- ix. Water and Wastewater Element;
- x. Parks and Recreation Element;
- xi. Schools Element;
- xii. Public Safety Element;
- xiii. Solid Waste Element;
- xiv. Libraries Element;
- xv. Capital Improvements Element;

- xvi. Intergovernmental Coordination Element; and
- xvii. Appendices.

Objective 1.1.2. Administration

Establish policies and procedures for administration of the Durham Comprehensive Plan that will result in its timely and effective implementation.

Policy 1.1.2a. Responsibility. The Director of the City-County Planning Department shall be responsible for interpreting the provisions of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.2b. Enforcement of the Comprehensive Plan. Ordinances, budgets, and procedures of the City Council and County Board of Commissioners shall be used to enforce the provisions of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.2c. Changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Changes to the Durham Comprehensive Plan shall be approved by the Governing Boards only if they are in compliance with the policies or language of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.2d. Plan Consistency. Applications for zoning change and Special Use Permits, which have been submitted after the adoption of the Durham Comprehensive Plan, shall be reviewed for consistency with the Plan. The City, the County, and Durham Public Schools shall consider the consistency of the proposals with the Durham Comprehensive Plan in making decisions regarding the extension and location of public infrastructure.

Objective 1.1.3. Plan Amendments

Provide an efficient and predictable process for proposing, considering and acting on amendments to the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.3a. Amendment Procedures. Application to amend the provisions of the Durham Comprehensive Plan shall comply with processes and procedures established by Director of the City-County Planning Department. The Planning Director shall advise the Joint City-County Planning Committee regarding all Plan Amendment applications.

Objective 1.1.4. Plan Evaluation

Periodically evaluate the effectiveness in implementing the goals, objectives, and policies of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.4a. Evaluation and Assessment. The City-County Planning Department shall annually prepare and present to the City Council and County Board of Commissioners an Evaluation and Assessment Report describing progress on implementing the Durham Comprehensive Plan. The Evaluation and Assessment Report shall include, as appropriate:

- i. An update of baseline information included in the Current Conditions Report;
- ii. Accomplishments in the reporting period, describing the degree to which the goals, objectives, and policies have been successfully reached;
- iii. Obstacles or problems in Plan implementation which resulted in underachievement of the Plan's goals, objectives, and policies; and
- iv. Recommendations for new or modified goals, objectives, or policies needed to correct problems.

Objective 1.1.5. Citizen Participation

Provide opportunities for citizen involvement in public decisions related to planning, zoning and transportation. Increase efforts to bring diverse interests into these processes, and involve as many people and organizations as possible.

Appendices

Chapter 17 is a set of appendices that includes a glossary of planning terms, a list of commonly used acronyms and a list of references.

Policy 1.1.5a. Planning Notification. The City-County Planning Department shall, ~~upon request~~, notify individuals, community organizations and neighborhood associations that have registered for such notification about planning and zoning decisions.

Policy 1.1.5b. Citizen Comment. The City Council and the County Board of Commissioners shall provide citizens the opportunity to comment on public decisions involving planning, zoning and transportation.

Policy 1.1.5c. Balanced Representation. The City and County shall continue their present efforts to ensure balanced geographic representation on advisory boards and commissions.

Policy 1.1.5d. Utilizing Citizen Participation. The City and County shall continue their present practices of utilizing citizen participation in developing, reviewing, implementing, and monitoring plans and programs.